

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

PERSONNEL AND PROPERTY SUB-COMMITTEE OF THE POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE - 13 FEBRUARY 2001

HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT

Report by Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Resources

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an information update on current and developing health and safety issues.

2. GENERAL

- 2.1 The Health and Safety Manager has now completed his review of the Council's Health and Safety Management System. A preliminary report has been prepared for initial discussion within the Senior Management Team with the subsequent proposals being proposed to the next meeting of this sub-committee. The report includes detailed recommendations for the development of strategic Health and Safety Plans at corporate at departmental level. The Health and safety Manager has identified many strengths in existing arrangements and the main improvement opportunities relate to setting of targets for a reduction in Lost Time Accidents, developing communication strategies and monitoring and regular review of performance against recognised standards. The need for effective reporting and expediting of repairs has also been highlighted as an important factor affecting the Health and Safety involvement. This issue is being actively pursued by Heads of Departments and the Property Maintenance Section to ensure that appropriate and robust systems are in place to prioritise and carry out repairs at the earliest possible date.

3. RISK AND ASSESSMENTS

- 3.1 Progress has been made on up-dating and distributing risk assessments. This is a "live" activity that will be subject to ongoing development. Consideration is being given to the preparation of a new risk assessment database. This will avoid duplication of effort and will reduce administration costs.

4. CONTROL OF SUBSTANCES HAZARDOUS TO HEALTH (COSHH)

- 4.1 The process of undertaking COSHH assessments is working well. The quality of assessment and cost / value output from the new Sypol computerised information system is considered to be very good. The COSHH assessment registers are currently being up-dated.
- 4.2 Building and Works has around 500 assessments to transfer to the Sypol system. This is not an urgent requirement as the existing format is suitable and sufficient, however, administrative support is being arranged for inputting of data, to ensure a standard approach to COSHH across the Council.

5. FIRE RISK ASSESSMENTS

- 5.1** Serious deficiencies were highlighted by the fire risk assessments conducted by Curfue Ltd on behalf of Educational and Social Services. A programme of works has subsequently been developed to address the remedial action required with priority improvements already instructed or actioned. The Health and Safety Section is preparing a fire precautions training schedule for Head Teachers, their deputies, janitors and care takers.
- 5.2** The Health and Safety section and the department have used the experience to develop an in-house fire risk assessment format which is currently being tested on a pilot scheme basis.

6. OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH

- 6.1** A contract review meeting was held in December 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the Occupational Health Service provided by AHS Ltd. The first six months to-date have been successful with good progress being made on health surveillance and workplace inspections. The statistics from May to December 2000 are as follows:

➤	VDU Screening / eyetest	= 142
➤	Hearing Tests	= 156
➤	Lung Function	= 159
➤	Workplace Assessments	= 6
➤	Management Medical Referral	= 115
➤	Self Referral	= 2
➤	Home Visit	= 1
➤	Workstation Assessment	= 2
➤	Immunisation Hepatitis "B"	= 3

- 6.2** A procedure for assessment and control of Hand-Arm Vibration is presently being developed. Testing of relevant employees will commence after management approval of the procedure. In addition to our commitment to employee health we are aware that HAVS is one of the priorities on the Health and safety Executive's 3 year action plan. HSE inspectors have been visiting sites throughout the UK to determine if employers are implementing a proper control strategy in line with legal requirements.
- 6.3** The Personnel Services Team is preparing a policy for stress management. This is expected to be available for consultation around February 2001.
- 6.4** The Council has been shortlisted with two other Councils in the People Management category of CoSLA's Excellence awards as a result of its work with the Scotland's Health at Work scheme. In line with the Council's commitment to employee health and welfare a three year strategy is currently being prepared in line with the HEBS criteria for the "Gold Award" standard. A summary of the strategy is expected to be reported to the next meeting of this sub-committee.

7. TRAINING

- 7.1** A further 10 managers were successful in completing the IOSH Managing Safely course in October 2000. Certificates were presented by Provost Boyd and Councillor Jackson to the Managers on 5th February. The next IOSH Managing Safely course is planned for March 2000.

7.2 Manual Handling, First Aid and Fire Precautions training is ongoing.

8. COMMUNICATIONS

8.1 The process of formal supervisor delivered "Toolbox Talks" is being considered to help improve the communication process at the "front-end". Toolbox talks were piloted within the Grounds Maintenance section of Community Services and within Personnel Services. The subjects were Personal Protective Equipment and Office Safety. Good co-operation was noted between line managers, supervisors and front line employees. At a review meeting within Community Services, it was concluded that the aim of the exercise had been achieved; namely:

1. Efficient delivery of PPE refresher instruction to 58 employees.
2. Verified record of instruction provided.
3. Supervisor acceptance of the process.
4. Employee participation, helping to raise the profile of H&S.

It has been recommended that the process of TBT's continues in all departments and throughout all levels of the organisation.

8.2 Recommendations for the establishment of management H&S committees within all departments, are included within the health and safety review report. It has been suggested that these be integrated with the current risk management meetings.

8.3 A strategy for a wider and more general promotion of health and safety is also being developed.

9. ACCIDENTS AND INCIDENTS

9.1 With reference to the attached accident statistics for the year end 31 December 2000 it can be seen that manual handling, and slips, trips and falls are the most common cause of accidents within the council. This is in line with national statistics. In 2001, risk awareness campaigns will be targeted at "housekeeping" for the avoidance of slips, trips and falls and the use of proper handling techniques

9.2 From a study of accident frequency rates based on the number employed in each department it has been shown that 78% of accidents are attributable to Manual Workers with 22% attributable to other staff categories.

Recent Incidents of Note

9.3 A fall from a ladder by a teacher in December 2000, resulted in broken ribs, wrist and femur, (thigh bone). Unfortunately, the teacher was working outwith the recommendation within the Council's standard that a second person assist by steadying the ladder. Use of ladders will form part of the section's training plan for 2001.

9.4 Suspect asbestos contamination occurred at a dwelling house during contractor refurbishment work and as a result of severe weather causing water damage to the roof area. Action was taken to provide alternative accommodation for the tenants while the suspect material was removed. The loft spaces of adjacent properties were secured as a

precautionary measure while survey work was carried out and any suspect material removed. The Council's Asbestos Policy as approved by the Sub Committee at its meeting on 19 January 1999 proved to be effective in supporting the exercise however the director of HATS has set up a working group of relevant officers to conduct periodic reviews of the policy's ongoing effectiveness.

9.5 A minor fire occurred at an unused Council HQ outbuilding. This was caused by sparks from oxygen/acetylene flame cutting equipment being used by a Skills Training Unit supervisor causing leave debris to smoulder. The fire services reacted quickly and professionally. The supervisor attempted to identify any debris in advance of starting the work but nevertheless refresher training was provided in an attempt to avoid a reoccurrence of the incident.

9.6 Preventive action has been taken to improve requirements for Permit to Work controls for all hot work. In addition, improvement opportunities were identified with regard to the emergency call -out procedure. Awareness and refresher training is being organised to ensure that in the event of any emergency, personnel are reminded of requirements for quickly contacting the emergency services with clear and concise instructions.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 The Sub-Committee is asked to:

- a) note the content of this report; and
- b) ask the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Resources to report back to the next meeting of the sub-committee with any policy requirements arising from the Health & Safety Manager's review of existing arrangements.

Fiona Lees
Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Resources
29 January 2001

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil

Anyone wishing further information should contact Mike Gallagher, Health and Safety Manager, telephone (01563) 554090.

H/reports/13feb01/health and safety report

AGENDA